

Abstract ID : 331

Title : Characteristics of Parturition and Neonatal Behavior in Steller Sea Lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*)

Category : Behavior

Student : Not Applicable

Preferred Format : Poster Presentation

Abstract : We videotaped the births of 59 Steller sea lions in the wild during May and June of 2001 - 2003 using remotely-operated video equipment. Parturition was independent of time of day (Chi-square = 3.67, $P = 0.72$) and individually recognizable females which gave birth in all three years ($n = 10$) were significantly earlier in 2003 (mean = June 4) compared to 2002 (mean = June 8; $t = 3.09$, $P = 0.006$, range -15 to +6 days) but not compared to 2001 (mean = June 5; $t = 0.77$, $P = 0.230$). Parturition occurred more rapidly when pups emerged headfirst ($n = 27$, mean = 10 min 33 sec) compared to tailfirst ($n = 30$, mean = 30 min 42 sec, $t = 3.46$, $P < 0.001$) and 70% of known females gave birth in opposite directions in different years. In all cases the amniotic sac broke prior to or during delivery. Pups breathed for the first time an average of 8 sec post-parturition ($n = 47$, range 0 - 43 sec) and vocalized for the first time at 58 sec ($n = 36$, range 4 to 269 sec). Mothers bit or picked up their pups 29 sec after parturition ($n = 47$, range 0 to 240 sec) but the pups' first breath was not correlated with how soon the mothers bit at or picked them up ($r = 0.063$, $P = 0.690$). Only one of 19 pups observed for 30 min after parturition had suckled within that time.